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Godly Wisdom

James 3:13

Prayer: Father, we do praise you and thank you for the incredible gift of your son, we thank you for the gift of the incarnation, for what a blessing it is, for what a hope it is. Lord, we are without your son, absolutely hopeless. And Father, we thank you for that gift. We thank you also, Lord, for the gift of your word which we celebrate this morning and celebrate right now by opening it up, looking into it, asking for the presence of your Holy Spirit to guide us as we once again look into your word. May you give us the ability to see it, to understand it, to hear it, and most importantly, to make it a permanent part of our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, our text this morning is James 3:13. James 3:13: *Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.* James loves to ask rhetorical questions. Those are questions that he doesn't expect to get an answer to. And James is not looking for a show of hands when he asks the question who is wise and understanding among you. Now,

some commentaries suggest that James is addressing this question to the same people that he opened up the chapter with when he said in James 3:1: *Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.* James followed up that admonition with a lengthy description of all the damage that the tongue can do, and we looked at that last week. And it could well be that he's directing his comments specifically at teachers who do use their tongues far more than most, and what he is looking for in teachers of God's word is something far more important than mere knowledge. It is wisdom that James is after here. And like his discussion about the tongue, this is not the first time James is discussing the topic of wisdom. In James 1:5, he said this: *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.*

So what is it that God is willing to give if we would just ask him? Well, I pointed out last time that many folks confuse wisdom with intelligence, and they are not one and the same. I pointed out that biblical wisdom is not the ability or the intelligence to do well at Jeopardy even if the topic is Bible verses. It's not just the accumulation of knowledge about things biblical even though the Bible is our source of biblical wisdom. You often heard me use the simple two-word definition of what biblical wisdom

really is, but even that needs some further explanation. We describe wisdom as skillful living. J. I. Packer describes it this way. He says: "Wisdom is the power to see, and the inclination to choose, the best and highest goal, together with the surest means of attaining it. Wisdom is, in fact the practical side of moral goodness. As such, it is found in its fullness only in God."

This is the power that God offers to us through wisdom. In short, it is the ability to choose the best means to the best ends, and that applies to everything we do. It doesn't matter if you are a cop or a housewife or a doctor or a hamburger flipper, you can do all of those things with or without wisdom. It was Francis Schaeffer who made the claim that there are no little people in the kingdom of God. And what he meant was that since God judges each of us not on our skill sets or on our achievements but rather on our faithfulness, well that by that criterion, a wise and faithful hamburger flipper is far more pleasing to God than an unwise physician.

One of the most enduring books in the last few centuries is a tiny little book called The Practice of the Presence of God. It's a little book written by Brother Lawrence in the 1600's. It's a book of great wisdom about capturing God's presence in everything, and I read it and was greatly blessed by it years ago. In fact, it's a

book that's been recommended by such luminaries as John Wesley and A. W. Tozer. You see, Brother Lawrence was a man of great wisdom, but he was also an uneducated dishwasher who worked in an abbey. He just practiced the genuine godly wisdom that God had freely given to him, and it's a wisdom available to any of us simply for the asking. And five centuries later, people are still being blessed with the wisdom of a dishwasher.

So what do we mean by that exclusive illusive word wisdom? Well, it's something that everybody wants but few people can put their finger on. I said last time that wisdom, wisdom is the power to perceive the word, the world, and the kingdom of God with a supernatural ability. It's the ability to connect the dots in each one of those spheres in a way that points directly to and from the mind of God. The word of God is where we are introduced to God's wisdom in its raw form. The world is the place where all of us live, it's the place where we practically apply this wisdom to whatever it is that God has given us to do. And the kingdom, the kingdom is the place that we aim our wisdom at. For example, we learn in God's word that *the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God*. Now we understand from that, the world is not going to embrace what it sees as foolishness without the supernatural grace of God and our efforts to overcome that foolishness knowing

that each one of us was at one time or another equally as foolish. And so we apply our understanding of the kingdom to the way we give people the knowledge of the kingdom, and God calls that wisdom. God describes it this way in 1 Corinthians 1:21. He says this, he says: *For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.*

Now, if you're starting to think well this wisdom is getting awful complicated, understand that it's not, it's not really. What makes it seem complicated is our upside down notions of what wisdom actually is. And God really takes those apart in 1 Corinthians 1:19, he says this, he says: *For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?*

Now in our text this morning, James is asking almost the exact same question but he's not asking it of the world like God is. He's asking it instead of believers. James 3:13: *Who is wise and understanding among you? It's a rhetorical question but it's one that James gives the answer to. He says, by his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.*

Now it's interesting that James chooses to frame the word "wisdom" with the concept of "meekness." You see, meekness is often confused with weakness when in fact it is its polar opposite. "Meekness" means power under control, and nobody demonstrated meekness better than the Lord Jesus Christ. Just imagine the power that we've been able to see shut down nature itself and terrify the most powerful of demons, to see that power now meekly accepting the arrest and the profound humiliation of the cross. The most powerful person in the entire universe, the creator and sustainer of life itself, including the lives of the very ones who are tormenting him is now stripped, beaten and crucified like a common criminal, and all of it was by Jesus' choice. It wasn't the Jewish leaders or the Roman government who put Jesus to death. It was Jesus who, moment by moment for the joy set before him, willingly endured the cross. One word from the Savior's mouth and God would have sent tens of thousands of avenging angels to utterly destroy his attackers, but that word was never to come. That was a power that was kept under control. That was the essence of meekness. It was the greatest power there ever was under the greatest control there ever was. The reason why Jesus displayed this meekness is simple. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life."*

The meekness of wisdom in Jesus was defined not only by his death on the cross for us but also, also by his life and his ministry among us. The meekness of wisdom understands that it is not enough just to be right as Jesus was perfectly. In Jesus, we saw perfection itself. And we saw perfection dining with wine bibbers and prostitutes, we saw him dialoguing with the very Pharisees who were trying to kill him. We saw him offer living water to the woman at the well and life itself to the woman taken in adultery. And his perfect righteousness gave him the right to condemn each and every one of those sinners. And it also gives him the same right to you condemn each and every one of us sinners and to say to us what he said to the woman's accusers, "*Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.*" You see, God in his mercy demonstrates this meekness of wisdom that reaches out from a position of righteousness to those who are caught up in unrighteousness. That's what Jesus did. That's one part of wisdom that he modeled for us. It's a vital part of sharing the gospel as well. It's also something that took me many, many, many years to learn. Jesus gave people room to move in his direction. And it brings up the question for us, do we give people that same room? Do we give them room to move in that direction? You see, I remember as a brand new believer wanting to hone my argument for the gospel until it was as sharp as a razor, and I wanted to do that not so much because I

wanted to have just the right answer but also because I wanted to be able to slice and dice anyone who got in my way. You see, as a new believer, I had remarkable success in sharing the gospel but there was no meekness of wisdom in my approach. In fact, many of the people I shared the gospel with went on to become believers in spite of and not because of my testimony, and I genuinely thought -- I've said this before -- I genuinely thought it was one part God's mercy, one part my cleverness that brought them into the kingdom, and I actually thought how fortunate God was to have me on his team. I distinctly remember one seminal moment when the roommate of a young lady that I had lead to the Lord came to see me, and we had a conversation about her need for Christ in her life. And she wasn't buying what I was selling, and so I turned to my alternative weapons which were sarcasm and belittlement, and after she left, I actually, I had the gall to complain to God about him sending her to me. You know, some people will talk about hearing voices from God, and I can tell you right now I did not hear a voice but I am absolutely certain, right then and right there, I felt his displeasure. Right then and right there he wordlessly communicated to me that when it comes to leading people to the Lord, he said, "You're done." He said, "You are cut off." My first year as a believer, I led probably a half dozen people to the Lord. In the next 39 years, I have been privileged by God to participate in his leading his sheep to himself, well, a number

half that size. You see, God in his mercy was showing me that I had pseudo wisdom. I didn't have the real stuff. I had the very pseudo wisdom that James describes in James 3:14-18. He says this: *But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.*

Now, I tell you I had that wisdom to let you know that that wisdom that is earthly, unspiritual and demonic is often times a wisdom that looks anything but earthly, unspiritual and demonic, 'cause I have to tell you that my pseudo wisdom looked really, really good to me and it looked good to the people around me. Folks were hearing the truth and coming to Christ and so God had to be blessing me, so I thought. I didn't know that God could use anything he chooses to bring forward his gospel from people, to rocks, to talking donkeys and that he can even choose to speak truth through false prophets and still hold those false prophets accountable. Balaam was a false prophet whom God forced to speak truth to the nation of Israel. And he did. But the book of Jude and 2 Peter strongly suggests that Balaam is in hell. You see, it's easy to think that because we are speaking God's wisdom we are therefore somehow protected from the effects of our own sinfulness but in reality, the opposite is true. You see, it is because we

are speaking God's truth that the enemy is far more interested in what we have to say than in what any other common conversation might offer. Now, remember this whole discussion that James is having about genuine wisdom is not directed at anybody but believers. I mean, God's own disciples were guilty of the very same earthly wisdom that revealed itself on the night before Jesus was crucified. I mean, consider after three years of intimate contact with Wisdom personified in Jesus Christ, they spent part of the very last night that Jesus spent on earth fighting over who would be the greatest in his new earthly kingdom.

You know, folks are always shocked, they're always astounded when men and ministries fail but they shouldn't be. I mean, after all, the devil is not stupid. He knows that the most strategic battlefronts are the places where God's truth is going forward, and James is speaking believers here and they and we both would run from something that smacks of obvious evil, but the devil is far more clever than that. You see, the devil can cloak bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in the loftiest of spiritual terms and make the whole enterprise seem God glorifying when it is anything but. James' warning about demonic wisdom is especially appropriate, because wherever God's kingdom is advancing, you can be certain that the enemy is right there trying to interject himself. He was there right in the Garden of Eden. He was the

uninvited guest at the last supper, and he had infiltrated even the most private of meetings that Jesus had with his disciples. Peter learned that the hard way. Peter's greatest expression of spiritual wisdom came very shortly before he received the greatest personal rebuke he could ever receive from his Lord. Right after Peter identifies Jesus as the Christ, Jesus told him this in Matthew 16. He said: *"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."* You can make the case that in all the annals of humankind, this may be one of the greatest attaboys that was ever given. It was given by the Lord Jesus Christ. But then we go on. In verse 20 it says: *Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of*

God, but on the things of man."

Peter had just expressed a classic example of demonic wisdom. And you know, at first blush Peter's protest seems completely reasonable. I mean his Lord, his Christ has just told him he's going to suffer and die at the hands of the chief priests and the scribes. Peter seems to be saying what anyone would say upon hearing that his beloved master is facing execution. *"Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you."* Well, Jesus' response identifies Peter's words as being exactly what James is describing when he refers to false wisdom as earthly, unspiritual and demonic. We know it was demonic because Jesus directly addressed the demon responsible, and that was Satan himself. *"Get the behind me, Satan!"* It was unspiritual because it was blind to the spirit world of the kingdom which fully understood that the Christ had to come to conquer death by dying himself, and it was earthly because it was rooted in Peter's very fleshly desire to be part of an earthly kingdom with Christ as the king. And yet for all intents and purposes, it appeared to be imminently reasonable and spiritually grounded in the love that Peter had for his Savior. But you see, true wisdom can see right through that. Hence we have James' continual warning in verse 16: *For where jealousy and selfish ambition exists, there will be disorder and every vile practice.*

You know, while I was preparing this message, the news started filtering in about this monstrous attack at this elementary school in Connecticut. And you know, people have an incredibly hard time getting their mind around just understanding such evil. But I want you to make no mistake about it, the end game of everything that Satan does is disorder and every vile practice. What we view with horror Satan views with absolute delight. And Peter's words took on a literal meaning this week in 1 Peter 5:8, he said: *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.* Well, first he devoured the young man and then the young man devoured his mother and then the children. You see, murder and child sacrifice are Satan's calling cards. Jesus said of Satan in John 8:44: *He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him.* And James has already described exactly where all the temptation of the enemy goes as its stated goal. He said that in James 1:14 where he said this: *But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.* The death of innocent children is exactly what a monster who longs for child sacrifice desires. We live in an age that loves to think that science is triumphant and that faith is really the stuff of fairy tales, but

on a spiritually instinctual level, we all still know that Satan is real. The Governor of the State of Connecticut was not talking science when he said, "Evil visited us this morning."

The response of the community also points to our spiritually instinctual response to evil, and that is prayer. I mean, the churches were packed and signs pleading for prayer were popping up all over the town. The war between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness had broken out once again into the flesh, and the enemy had clearly won the first round. But he will never win the final round. You see, he knows he is a defeated foe. He just doesn't want us to know. All you have to do is go through scripture and note every single time that Jesus confronts the enemy, all the bluff and all the bravado that they have towards us is gone and all that's left in them is them begging Jesus for mercy. Matthew describes one such incident in Matthew 8:28. This is what he says. He says: *When he had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way.* You know, we are no match for the enemy's power. But they are no match for Jesus' power. Verse 29 says: *And suddenly they cried out, saying, "What have we to do with you, Jesus, you son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?"* Like I said, they know they are defeated. They know it is

only a matter of time before their sentence is going to be carried out. Verse 30 says: *Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons begged him, saying, "If you cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine." And he said to them, "Go." So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea and perished in the water.* You know, I wouldn't -- I wouldn't dare try to take on the enemy by myself, but I am happy to hide behind my King and Savior who I place all of my trust in.

Jesus is telling us about two different kinds of wisdom, and they really do sum up two very different kinds of kingdoms. There's the kingdom of the Lord of Lords and then there is the kingdom of the Lord of the flies or the swine, as it were. And there is a choice to make about which kingdom you are going to serve. We pray for the families of those who are lost. As we see played out in real life, the enemy's wisdom, we see it as truly earthly, unspiritual and demonic. And so we point people to the only hope that they truly have, and that hope is Jesus Christ and the wisdom that he represents. Listen to how James describes it in verse 17. He says: *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by*

those who make peace.

God's wisdom is first pure. God points out first and foremost that wisdom from heaven itself is pure, spotless and holy because this wisdom emanates from God himself. To see wisdom personified in the flesh, one has to look no further than Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:23 says: *But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to you gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.* Jesus is the power of God and the wisdom of God, and as such, this wisdom is absolutely pure.

Next it says God's wisdom is peaceable. Now, the Greek word here for "peaceable" is the word "eirenokos." It's the word that we get irenic from. Not ironic. Irenic. Two different words. Someone who is irenic is the exact opposite of someone who's always looking for a fight. Someone who is irenic is someone who's always looking for a way to find peace. One of the first questions that I ask of someone that we are considering for a leadership position is is he irenic. Is he always looking for a way to make peace? I say that because I have known an awful lot of very smart and very gifted angry people. I can also tell you the havoc they wreak. Well, that havoc chokes off the meekness of wisdom. I mean, I've been in meetings where you can cut the tension with a chainsaw because of

the anger of one person, and that anger has the ability to poison everything, and it makes it impossible for the meekness of wisdom to flow. I can also tell you that we've been blessed with elders and deacons, all of whom have irenic spirits. I can also tell you that the model for all of us when it comes to these qualities is the Prince of peace, Jesus Christ. James goes on to say: *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle.* Matthew 12:20 quotes Isaiah saying of Jesus this: *A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory.* The woman at the well was a bruised reed. The woman caught in adultery was a smoldering wick. Both were figuratively and literally at the ends of their respective ropes, and yet the meekness of Jesus' wisdom was focused on gently ministering truth to broken, flickering lives. Jesus' gentleness brought justice to victory by creating a place for the sinner to turn to instead of a theological hoop for them to jump through. Jesus could have pummeled those women with his righteousness and their sins but instead he led them gently to truth. His wisdom had the gentleness that I lacked as brand new Christian.

But the wisdom from above is first pure then peaceable, gentle, open to reason. Now, the King James version calls this easy to be intreated. And you know, the easiest way to find out if someone has this meekness of wisdom is to simply disagree with them. If

they have this, if they are easy to be intreated, that won't be a problem. I mean, have you ever known someone who is instantly defensive or argumentative or even broken hearted if someone disagreed with them? These are folks who are not easily intreated. Those who are easily intreated know that they don't have all the answers. They may have firm convictions but they are always willing to hear somebody out when they disagree with them. Consider the words of Lazarus' sister Martha when she finally sees Jesus. This is after Lazarus has been in the grave, John 11:21. It says: *Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."* Now, commentators are divided. They don't really know, they're divided over whether or not this is a rebuke or a statement of faith by Martha. One thing that we know it certainly shows is that Jesus was a man easily approached and easily intreated. What is stunning, though, is that Jesus was easily intreated even though he was the only one who had no reason whatsoever to be so, for the simple reason that Jesus was never wrong. I mean, he was perfect. He was flawless. He did have all the answers. And yet once again, the meekness of his wisdom, the power that he had due to his perfection was a power that he always kept under control. And so he was easily intreatable, always open to reason.

Again, *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable,*

gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits. Now, the first four aspects of the meekness of wisdom are passive. I mean, wisdom, it's pure, it's peaceable, it's gentle, it's reasonable but you know, the full portrait of the wisdom from above is also active. It reaches out, it is full of mercy and good fruits. Mercy is grace or compassion extended to someone not entitled to it, and it is always extended from the strong to the weak. You know, it's not the victors who need mercy. It is the vanquished. And so mercy is something that can only be freely given, it can never, never be demanded. Romans 9:15 says of God this, it says: For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy. You see, when you fully understand mercy, you realize you've received something you couldn't possibly earn.

You know the debtor, the story of the debtor in Matthew 18, there's a debtor who's forgiven a great debt by his master who then goes on to demand payment for a small debt, and he winds up being held responsible for his whole debt. Well, he's held responsible not because he's broken some kind of debt rule but because he gives indication that he never really knew his master. Listen to what 1 Corinthians says about that in 1 Corinthians 2:12, it says: *Now we have not received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit*

who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. You see, when you begin to know the master, you understand that you can't really understand the mercy you've been freely given without being compelled to extend it. You also realize that the refusal to extend mercy to someone else means that in some way you think you've got something that you were entitled to, something that never really belonged to you in the first place. Matthew 18:32 says this: Then his master summoned him and said to him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you? And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.

Along with mercy are good fruits. Again, *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits. These are the fruits of the spirit: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. You know, the key to the fruit of the spirit is the key to wisdom as well. You will never get the fruits of the spirit by trying to appropriate them as individual character enhancements. You might be able to improve some aspects of your personality through books or seminars or teachings, and those are, they could be good things, but those are not the fruit of the*

spirit. The fruit of the spirit is the invisible presence of the Holy Spirit of God made manifest in the lives of his sheep. Now, you might want to ask the question, well, is there a difference between the patience that you get through seminars and books, et cetera, and the patience that you get from the fruit of the spirit? Well, on at least three different levels they're vastly different. One, one is a reflection of your own efforts, the other is a reflection of the Spirit's efforts. Secondly, one glorifies me, the other one glorifies God. And thirdly, the source of self-improvement is obviously the self. The source of the fruit of the spirit is Jesus Christ. And the key to gaining all of the wisdom that James speaks of here, well, it just so happens to be the very same key to gaining all of the fruits of the spirit, and it's not by seeking those fruits out. The key to all of it, to the wisdom and the fruit is what Jesus says here in John 15:4. He says this, he says: *"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."* I think I can boil down all of what James is saying about wisdom to a street translation of what Jesus just said. Jesus is simply saying, the more you hang around him, the more like him you are going to be. Abide in me, and you will bear much fruit.

And finally James says: *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.* Now again, partiality should be familiar territory for those of us who have been studying the book of James. A few months back, we looked at James 2:1 which says this: *My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.* And I asked back, then why is it that God is so exercised towards partiality? Well, morally speaking, it all goes back to this debt, this great debt that we all owe. You see, God sees us as tapped out, God sees us as utterly without a leg to stand on because God sees every one of us as this debt-ridden servant that Jesus was speaking of. He says morally speaking, we are all beggars, beggars that he loved, beggars that he died for but beggars that he's made into co-heirs with Christ. Wonderful stuff, but beggars nonetheless. The church that James was writing to was in no position to practice any form of one upmanship because of that. Partiality attempts to ignore our status as beggars in order to pretend that there are different levels of quality in people. The meekness of wisdom precludes that. Sincerity also precludes that. The King James translation has sincerity down as without hypocrisy. You know, I said last week, to be a hypocrite is literally to have two separate faces, one for a person's face and another one for their back. They are

two different personas occupying the same person. Hence, that person can praise God with one face and curse his brother with the other. James says: *My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Wisdom from above has but one face.*

So let me conclude, let me conclude by asking two very important questions. Number one, how do we get this -- this wisdom from above? Well, James has the first and obvious answer in James 1:5. He says: *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.*

Question number two is how do we know we've received it? And again, James asks and answers the same question in James 3:13, he says: *Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.* You know what James is saying here? James is saying the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Now, God's wisdom is not a theoretical construct, it's not a philosophy, it's not a matter of self-improvement. Godly wisdom is in essence a lifestyle. It's a pattern of living that flows out of a person who is abiding in Christ.

J. I. Packer again points out how it becomes a lifestyle. He says this. He says: "Not until we have become humble and teachable, standing in awe of God's holiness and sovereignty, acknowledging

our own littleness, distrusting our own thoughts and willing to have our minds turned upside down, can divine wisdom become ours."

James concludes the discussion by saying in James 3:17: *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.* Now, there are a number of people that I've met in my Christian life who stand out in my mind as possessing godly wisdom. None of them were particularly brilliant in academia, but all of them understood many things that geniuses can only guess at. I think of people like Rosie Zaorski, who was a member here for many, many years, you know, she worked in a factory and then as a janitor for many years before dying of an absolutely vicious disease. But you know, she passed the test that James spoke of because, "By her good conduct, she showed her works in the meekness of wisdom." To the best of her ability she was pure, she was peaceable, she was gentle, she was open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. So was Helen and Bob Sorensen, and Bertha Moore and Jean Warner, and others who used to be part of this body and are now with the Lord. They were not theologians, they were not rocket scientists. They just understood the value of what it is they had been given. Proverbs 16:16 says: *How much better to get wisdom than gold! To get understanding is*

to be chosen rather than silver. And because they had that gift, they were able to do what James concludes with. He says: And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. Wouldn't you want this to be something said about you after you've left this earth? And you know, it can be. And it's not really rocket science. It's really just a matter of choosing who or what you will abide in. Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.

Let's pray.

Father God, I do -- I thank you, I thank you that we have a standard to go to for what genuine godly wisdom is, we don't have to fake it, we don't have to make it up on our own, we don't have to be lost in a world that just mimics false wisdom as real wisdom. Father, thank you for the standard, thank you for the understanding of what that wisdom is, and I pray that each and every one of us would ask for and receive that wisdom today. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.